

LETTERS

Sidewalk double standards

I just read the article regarding the Hamilton snow-clearing operations. The city's maintenance manager, Mike Field, praised the sidewalk clearing. My question is, why does the city have two standards for sidewalk snow clearing? One for themselves and one for homeowners. Residents are required to remove snow and ice from in front of their property 24 hours after a snowfall, no minimum amount of snow is mentioned, and heavy ice doesn't matter. The city on the other hand has a minimum of five centimetres of snow before they clear snow from city walkways, and use heavy snow and ice as an excuse. Shouldn't the city hold itself to a higher standard than homeowners? Lead by example, have the same expectations for homeowners? A homeowner who doesn't clear a city-owned sidewalk can face a complaint to city bylaw. Unfortunately, we can't call bylaw on the city.

Don Despond, Hamilton

Excellent snow clearing

I live on a transit route and the sidewalks are quickly cleared by respectful operators. I appreciate their efforts in a job well done.

Carrie Henry, Hamilton

Creating a crisis

It's a shame how the province is trying to dismantle health care, but it is not new. Remember Mike Harris's education minister who said he needed to create a crisis in education to crush unions. This is just Doug Ford doing the same with health care. Starve it, then point to how it's broken and how the private sector will do better. He may fool all you Ford fans, but he won't fool history.

Marian Schimmel, Burlington

Compassion for victims

So the Supreme Court rules that stacking parole eligibility is cruel and unusual punishment. What exactly do they call using an animal incinerator to dispose of a murdered girlfriend's body, a thrill killing of an innocent man trying to sell his truck? Loved ones of the murdered suffer cruel and unusual punishment until the day they die. Why then do perpetrators of these vile acts expect any less punishment? Compassion for the killers can only deepen the wounds for those left behind who suffer every minute of every day. Perhaps members of the Supreme Court should remove their collective heads from their backsides and show more compassion for victims.

Lloyd Moning, Mount Hope

Tommy wouldn't approve

My grandfather was friends with Tommy Douglas in the 1930s and '40s. Mr. Douglas was a humanitarian and a strong supporter of both Jews and Israel. Indeed, directly because of Mr. Douglas's support meant some of my cousins were saved by escaping the waves of Jew-hatred and coming to Canada, even while our government's view on allowing Jews was that of "None is too many." Anti-Semitism was not unique to Europe in the 20th century. The British government, while being supportive of the establishment of Israel, was coerced to severely restrict Jewish immigration into parts of Mandatory Palestine. None was too many was also the mantra of many leaders in the Islamic world. It still is for some. The BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement is exactly that, an effort to end Jewish sovereignty and security for Jews. Sarah Jama and today's NDP are in favour of the BDS movement. Tommy Douglas would certainly object; they are no longer the party he once led.

Steven Werner, former Hamiltonian

All welcome in the blue tent

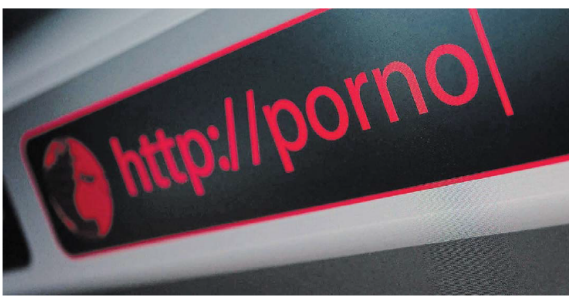
The virtue signalling over Conservatives meeting with a populist German politician is nauseating. Today's Conservatives, under future Prime Minister Poilievre, know they must build a big tent with room for everyone. We need more diversity in our politics, not less.

Jenn Rodriguez, Hamilton

Don't look for civility

I have read several articles lately about the lack of civility in, specifically the exchanges in the House of Commons between Pierre Poilievre and the prime minister. Poilievre is a bright, eloquent, hard hitting politician who does not pull any punches. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is a skillful politician, adept at avoiding answers. Federal politics is the highest level of competition in our country. Politics is about maintaining power when you have it, and trying hard to get the power when you don't. A career politician once advised me that politics can be a blood sport. Don't look for more civility between Trudeau and Poilievre.

David Gallo, Ancaster



TORSTAR FILE PHOTO

With online porn more and more easily available to kids, we need to do a lot more to protect them, argues Jenna Scholz. She wants adult websites mandated to require age verification before allowing access.

Our kids need more protection

JENNA SCHOLZ

The internet wasn't designed with children's safety in mind. Yet in this digital age that's exactly where they're spending time — for school, socialization and entertainment.

As you read this, children are being exposed to graphic sexually explicit material that is accessible in seconds.

The government can help prevent this by requiring adult websites to use an age verification process before allowing access to their content. Unfortunately, the Liberal government just turned down an opportunity to do so by rejecting an amendment to its Online Streaming Act, Bill C-11, which aims to modernize Canada's broadcasting legislation by including online undertakings.

Last December the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications added an amendment during its study of Bill C-11 to ensure children are protected from exposure to sexually explicit material online just as they already are to traditional broadcasting methods such as radio and television.

This amendment passed in the Senate in February and Bill C-11 is back in the House of Commons to assess the changes that were made. However, during the debate on March 8, the Heritage Minister's Parliamentary Secretary explained that the Liberal government rejected the Senate's amendment "to compel online undertakings to im-

plement methods, such as age verification, to prevent children from accessing explicit sexual material" because it "seeks to legislate matters in the broadcasting system that are beyond the policy intent of the bill." He mentioned that they hoped to address this important issue in upcoming legislation, likely referring to the long-anticipated online harms bill. It's unknown when that bill will be tabled.

While our attention can quickly move on to other issues, let's pause a moment and realize what's at stake here. We need the government to follow through and swiftly act on this. Let us not forget who this measure protects and why that protection is necessary. Every delay leads to more children being harmed.

Research shows children are encountering sexually explicit material at increasingly younger ages. For example a study by the British Board of Film Classification revealed 51 per cent of 11 to 13 year olds had already been exposed. The percentage increased to 79 per cent for older minors. Over half of these minors saw sexually explicit material unintentionally.

What are they seeing? Titles such as "Daddy keeps f---ing daughter till she likes it," "Beach spy changing room two girls," and "Crying blonde b--- takes rough drilling." I would apologize for including the titles above, but if children can stumble upon them, we need to talk about them.

These are typical examples from a study that found that at least one in eight titles on the home pages of popular pornography sites describe sexual violence.

And what is the impact? Two decades worth of peer-reviewed research documents various harms associated with youth being exposed to sexually explicit material. These include confusion over sexual expectations and consent, mental-health challenges, low self-esteem, body-image insecurities, and being a perpetrator or victim of sexual aggression.

Exposure to sexually explicit material poses a serious threat to the well-being of children. We don't allow children to buy alcohol, gamble or attend sexually explicit films at theatres, yet online they can stumble on adult content in seconds.

We must act to protect children's rights to life, survival and development.

In 2021 the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of the Child published general comment 25, which affirmed children's rights in the digital space and advocated for age verification as a method to uphold those rights. Australia, France, Germany, the UK, the United States, and the European Union are already acting on age verification. Canadian youth also deserve these online protections.

While this won't be included in Bill C-11, other bills such as Bill S-210 and the anticipated online harms legislation can accomplish this.

The path forward will take work, but we must commit to walking it knowing it is both achievable and urgently necessary.

JENNA SCHOLZ IS THE CO-ORDINATOR OF GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY FOR DEFEND DIGNITY, A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION WORKING TO END SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN CANADA.

Making sense of the stuff of dreams



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

A dream is something imagined for the betterment of humanity. "I have a dream," is what Martin Luther King said 60 years ago in a prophetic speech about justice and racial reconciliation.

We remember because, as Solomon put it 3,000 years earlier, "Without a vision the people will perish." We remember because we need visionary dreams, and dreamlike desires, like we need air.

The other type of dream comes in our sleep. You're flying. No, you're being chased. Good grief, now you're naked, in public.

Surveys show that in some western nations, including Canada, it's common to dream of your teeth falling out. What's with that? Then, or many other dreams.

It's good to consider because World Sleep Day slipped by yesterday. It's an understated part of life. Live to 80 and sleep 20-some years with about 100,000 dreams. Most people dream three to five times nightly.

This is it. Dreams arrive like clockwork, like a train to the station. We board with no choice in the matter, then travel to God knows where. Then, unlike those visionary dreams, we usually forget the entire

consider the periodic table and the atom's structure itself — came with the help of dreams. There's a reason we say "It's good to sleep on it."

REM dream sleep also helps you empathize and relate better with others, say researchers, even as it can help with something like weight loss, considering you're prone to eat more when sleep deprived.

Some of history's power nappers, by the way, include Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy. "I'm having a JFK," we'll say in our home when having a nap. But if you dream during naps (it's best to keep naps short, to about 20 minutes) that shows you're likely sleep deprived, needing more night sleep.

In fact, globally, we get about two hours less nightly sleep than 100 years ago. Blame modern life stressors. And sloppy living. We allow distractions to keep us from that healing dream sleep.

Further, in "Why We Sleep," UC Berkeley researcher Matthew Walker notes that the road between sleep disorders and mental illness, both on the rise, is a "two-way street." Some claim we're in a world sleep crisis.

Have three teens in your home and I'll guarantee that your world will have a sleep crisis. Then again, some people — there's my bride — need less sleep, while others, especially creatives/types, like the dude in my mirror, need more.

Be that as it may, it's the weekend. So don't get too tight about any of this. Just have a JFK sometime. I will. Or maybe I'll sleep for longer and, with any luck, dream of a fine summer day.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM.



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